

**TOWN OF BEDFORD
ENERGY COMMISSION MINUTES
September 22, 2022**

A meeting of the Bedford Energy Commission was held on Thursday, September 22, 2022 in the Town Meeting Room, 10 Meetinghouse Road.

I. Call to Order: Chairman Russell opened the meeting at 7:00 PM.

Present: John Russell (Chair), Chris Bandazian (Vice Chair) (Town Council Liaison), Tom Elwood, Chuck Nettleship, Carolyn Mahoney, Sue Thomas (Town Council alternate)
Absent: Bing Lu, Andrew Gillis, Bill Foote (SB Liaison), Mindy Bator (SB alternate)

II. Approval of August 25, 2022 Minutes

Councilor Bandazian wanted to add to something he said. Jeff Foote had asked about using the Transfer Station reserve for 2024 – 2025 and he told Mr. Foote that they had used that already for the improvements. There is still \$200,500 in the Capital Reserve. He wanted that clarification.

MOTION by Councilor Bandazian to approve the minutes of the August 25, 2022 meeting. Seconded by Ms. Mahoney. Vote taken – Motion Passed – 5-0-1 (Thomas abstained as she was not present at that meeting).

III. Reports of Members and Committees

a. School projects progress and planning – No update as both SB reps were not present

Councilor Bandazian stated that if the School District didn't want to do Portfolio Manager, they can do it manually for them. They did it with the Town at the beginning. They got copies of their bills and entered them manually into Portfolio Manager. Compared to the Town it's a much smaller task. They may want to do that and if they establish a baseline, the School District could transfer that data at any point when they want to automate it. Where the School is doing HVAC systems, he thought it would be great if they did January 2020 to present. It would establish a baseline and as they do the HVAC improvements, it would show some really good progress.

IV. Old Business

a. Solsmart

Ms. Mahoney stated that she reached out and they were going to set up a meeting to find out what they can do moving forward.

b. Solar Projects

- 1. Transfer Station**
- 2. Town Pool PV Shade/Shelter**

Councilor Bandazian stated that he had a conference call last Friday that seemed very promising. They haven't lost their place in the queue with Eversource. Prices may have changed, but it's not off the table. He thought that at the end of the year they've got the Federal Congressional Direct Spending grant; kind of a 50% off sale on 3-phase power. The new Inflation Reduction Act was great news for the School District and for the Town, because up to this point, the major incentive has been the Investment Tax Credit. That meant you had to get a private investor involved, and whenever you do that, some money between Washington and the completion of the project was

lost; the profits. Now under this program that money is available to them as a rebate. They would complete the project and get a check for 30% of the project. Plus, there was another incentive for domestic content, which if the project gets approved in 2023, construction takes place over 2023/2024, it only requires 40% domestic content. With that new bill, they could get the photovoltaic project done for 40%. Over the life of the project, the cost per kilowatt hour is brought down to 9/10 of a cent. It's just that upfront investment that has to get approved by the voters in March. All of that looks very favorable for bringing a warrant article forward. The discussion is to include the trash compactors and presumably use that \$200k in Capital Reserve. It's not just compactors; there are special trailers that Public Works has been working on. He didn't know the details on that, but if more incentive was needed, they spend \$170k on backhoes every seven years. The one they've had for three years just had the boom break, because it's not intended to mash down garbage, and that cost \$30k to fix. Meanwhile, they had to use the one from the Public Works garage. If there ever needed to be some timing to bring home a message that you save some money by investing some money, it's now. It's subject to finances with the Town, because the Town has to put money up front. They will be having discussions on that soon, but the news was all good.

Chairman Russell stated that the hope was that money would be freed up as they went through the year. He wanted to know if there was any sense if that was coming true. Councilor Bandazian stated that they've had vacancies. Councilor Thomas stated that they start as the budget was being done. It's was still only September. It becomes more and more clear what it's going to be. Councilor Bandazian stated that there was some other money that was available that could be used. Generally, they have taken money that's leftover and bought the two six-wheeled dump trucks that they would have to budget for in the next year, because they always have to replace two. There's other money for that, potentially, that's come in. He thought the picture looked favorable.

Ms. Mahoney wanted to confirm that they had to redo the Federal grant. Councilor Bandazian stated that they had to submit more information. Councilor Thomas added that they didn't have to redo it; it's the next step of it. It was another questionnaire. Councilor Bandazian stated that it asks for a lot more information; Eversource had to provide a lot more information and they did. Ms. Mahoney wanted to know if they were all set. Councilor Bandazian responded that he wouldn't say all set, because they don't know that, but he hasn't heard that it's not moving along. Ms. Mahoney wanted to know if it was the one that was expiring back in June. Councilor Bandazian stated that two things happened in June. One was the Federal Energy Department wanted a lot of information fast. The other was that their price lock with Eversource expired. Councilor Thomas explained that the extra work that Jeff Foote had to do was for the \$500k grant and that kept moving along. Councilor Bandazian stated that the other piece was the little projects that they talked about. He updated the RFP and Jeff said that DPW would put that out. That was the pool building, equipment bay at the Safety Complex, plus if anybody wants to build a shelter at the pool or for a vehicle at the Safety Complex or Highway Garage, they could propose that.

Councilor Thomas stated that if it makes it to a warrant article it gets voted on. She thought it was going to be a tough year for budgeting, but thought if the message gets out there correctly; it's all about messaging, because there were a lot of things in the budget this year. Chairman Russell wanted her advice on messaging. He wanted to know if it was going around to different community groups and telling people what was going on. Councilor Thomas stated that how they get messaging out to the community was a baffling question every year. She thought using BCTV and maybe the Men's Club, Lions Club, whatever organizations there are. Mr. Elwood stated that the Men's Club has presentations on a regular basis and it's not hard to get on the agenda. Chairman Russell stated that the Women's Club was quite active too. Councilor Thomas stated that the key

was getting people to go vote and you need 60% for it to pass. Ms. Mahoney wanted to know when they will know if it's a warrant article or not. Councilor Thomas stated that the Council decides what warrant articles go on the ballot. Councilor Bandazian added that there would be public hearings in January and then the ballots get printed. Councilor Thomas stated that they start working on the budget the end of October for the March election.

c. PUC Update Community Power Initiatives approved

Chairman Russell stated that Community Power had been approved. Councilor Bandazian stated that the regulations were finally approved by the Legislature. It's a joint Legislative and administrative committee. He pointed out that Lebanon had a pending application that the PUC approved with requests for a lot more information. He didn't know what the pace was, but at least that roadblock was lifted.

d. Re-open discussion on Community Power

Chairman Russell stated that he read through the Community Power presentations, and it is not trivial if they go forward with Community Power. Councilor Bandazian stated that when every month they say that nothing is happening, people don't take you seriously when there is something happening. There is something that is happening. He didn't want to take ownership of it on the Commission, because there were other things he was taking ownership of on the Commission, but he thought it made sense to bring it forward. They had tabled it until the next sitting of the next Energy Commission in May 2023. He didn't mind making a motion to un-table it.

Chairman Russell stated that his Eversource bill last year was \$240 and this year for the same month was \$393. He thought they should be trying to do something. He found the whole thing quite confusing and the more he reads it the more questions he has: how do they proceed, what do they do, do they bring one of the three main players in right away to help them present to the Town Council or do they bring them in later, how do they choose between the three, how do they form the study committee. The last time he spoke with Dave Gilbert about this, he moved from him wanting to choose the committee to wanting the Energy Commission to choose the committee. He would like to know how the Town Council felt about that. Councilor Thomas stated that the Council hadn't discussed it. She thought the little bit that was discussed a while back was that the Energy Commission would create the committee. Last year they had different people on the Town Council too. Chairman Russell didn't know if it should be a member of the community like Jeff Kerr, Andrew Gillis, or Bing Lu. He's not in that game, so he didn't feel good enough to spot somebody pulling a fast one over them. He thought it should be somebody who's in the game.

Mr. Nettleship thought that if they could rough out what Lebanon has done and what the Energy Commission could bring that was digestible, kind of a white paper, and spell it out really succinctly to make it easier to digest for everybody and get it out to the public. Councilor Thomas stated that they have to get it cleared through the Town Council first. Chairman Russell stated that he has the Hollis presentation and he started to tailor it up for Bedford, so they have a starting point. It's kind of focused towards the CPCNH (Community Power Coalition of NH) solution. He wanted to give all three players a fair shake; reach out to all three and ask for a slide of what they've done. Mr. Nettleship stated that he would work with Chairman Russell on a slide deck. He thought maybe they could draft a course of action and present it and wanted to know how the decision would be made. Councilor Bandazian thought they should first get a consensus and say with the kilowatt hour increase they were looking at, if a three cent decrease could be achieved, would that be something the Council was willing to look at, and this is the path the Town would have to go down and it's a long process, ultimately going in front of the voters. He couldn't foresee 2023 as when

that happens, so there's a long time to learn about it. There were a limited number of players, so they all have their very concise presentations for governing bodies like ours that have lots to do and need something very digestible. If they don't have those materials ready, they would soon. He thought it was always good to tell people what you're thinking of doing. He assumed that nobody was going to say don't investigate saving residents money on their electric bill.

Councilor Thomas didn't know if it was voted down in the past, but the opposition was that most of the programs were opt-out. If it was opt-in, it was more palatable. Everyone was in until they say they're not was not something they normally do. The Council has changed, and there are new people on the Council that probably need to hear what community power is. She thought before they go too far down the path that it would be good to go before the Council and explain what it is. Bill Carter sets the agenda. She thought their step one would be to do a presentation to the Town Council. Chairman Russell thought they had the bones from the Hollis Powerpoint. He was confused if the study group makes the choice of the three or did the Town Council make the choice of the three. Mr. Elwood stated that they were thinking of proposing something and thought they had to start somewhere and they have three running processes now that they could get a decent proposal from. Councilor Thomas thought that before they go as far as making a decision of which one, they go before the Council saying this is what the concept is and here are the three players and this is the way each one does it. They haven't made a decision yet on which one; that's why they need the committee to do the work. She thought it was way too early to choose one. They need to present the basic idea of what it is. Councilor Bandazian agreed. They should explain the concept and the process to go through to achieve it and then leave it there; maybe five or ten minutes. Councilor Thomas added to say they want to put together a committee of people that would really dig down. That committee would also be responsible for educating the community, so you would want people that were good at that. The committee should not be the Energy Commission. The committee should be people on the Commission, but it has to be bigger. It's a community-wide effort, so you need a community-wide committee.

MOTION by Councilor Bandazian to un-table the Energy Commission's exploration of Community Power. Seconded by Chairman Russell. Vote taken – Motion Passed – 5-0.

- e. **Clean Energy NH Legislative & PUC Update** – No update

V. New Business:

- a. **Possibilities offered by the Inflation Reduction Act** – Already covered

Ms. Mahoney mentioned that there was a proposal for a new Police Station. She saw in the minutes that were sent out that there was a discussion about electric charging stations and vehicles at the Police Station. She wanted to know if they were in the design phase for the new police Station and an opportunity to put in any kind of funding for solar or something at the Police Station that would reduce their carbon footprint. She was trying to understand where the Energy Commission fit into it. Councilor Thomas stated that they have a design/build team and they were in the broad design, because the site was not a done deal yet. Councilor Bandazian added that broadly it could be. The domestic content by the time that becomes relevant would be higher, so for that additional 10% it would have to be more. He didn't think solar panels would be a problem.

Chairman Russell wanted to know about the existing building. Councilor Thomas stated that it would still be the Fire Station and Town Offices. Mr. Elwood wanted to know then what about the

Town Offices. Councilor Thomas stated that the Town Offices were bursting at the seams. The plan would be Police would move out into a new Police Station, there would be a Fire Substation. Planning would move out of the Town Offices. They are in the basement of the Town Offices and kind of spread out. If they hire a new Town Manager right now, there was no place to put that person. That's the general plan. It's moving slowly. They were still figuring out the timing.

Chairman Russell wanted to know if the market was working in their favor and the response was no; supply chain, bonding, interest rates were going up. Chairman Russell was wondering about the cost of land. Councilor Thomas stated that things might be leveling, but certainly not declining.

Ms. Mahoney wanted to know how they insert themselves into substations and police stations. Councilor Bandazian stated that at the right time they would. Councilor Thomas stated that if it gets on the ballot this year there would be public input. Chairman Russell mentioned Mr. Nettleship's idea of how to strengthen resilience. Councilor Bandazian mentioned the Master Plan of 2010 when the Energy Commission was brand new. One of the things they looked at was energy diversity. The Town was and still is dependent on heating oil and electricity. There's been some extension of natural gas availability. That infrastructure is branching out and there is a little diversity and resilience there. He thought they probably weren't big enough to do compressed natural gas vehicles. Manchester does if they wanted to do that. You would lose some BTU's when you switch to gas, but vehicles would be somewhat cleaner. That would be an option. Renewables would be great if you can do them. He thought they were a ways from emergency vehicles, but the vehicle the tax assessor goes out in. They've used hybrids for 15+ years for those things. They're not emergency vehicles and it really didn't matter. Mr. Nettleship thought if they've done that then they should let the public know about that and that they've been tackling the diversity side of it.

b. Discussion of energy cost saving programs available to residents

1. **NH Saves** – No discussion
2. **HAREI** – No discussion
3. **Other ideas** – None

Councilor Bandazian mentioned the Button Up Bedford program at their next meeting on October 27th. He will send them all promotional materials to try and get the word out. Dr. Andy Duncan from Lakes Region Community College will lead that information session. He will talk about what people can do with their homes and how to get it energy audited and not have to pay for a lot of it.

VI. Reminders:

- a. **Next upcoming meeting October 27th 2022**

VII. Adjournment

MOTION by Councilor Bandazian to adjourn at 7:44PM. Seconded by Mr. Nettleship. Vote taken – All in favor.

Respectfully submitted by,

Dawn Boufford